

**GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR USING COMMUNITY VIDEO
IN COMMUNITY FOREST USER GROUP SOCIAL MOBILIZATION**

Prepared by : Pamela Brooke, Global Vision, Inc. Community Video Consultant
with Kedar Sharma, GreenCom Nepal Community Video Specialist

Submitted to : USAID-Nepal Environment and Forest Economic Activity (EFEA)
The Academy for Educational Development GreenCom Nepal
Project and Global Vision, Inc.

July 10, 1997

I. AN INTRODUCTION TO COMMUNITY VIDEO

What Is It?

Video is a storytelling medium. Whether the story format is a news report, a drama, an interview, a documentary, etc. there is always the distinction between those who are telling the story and those to whom the story is being told. The power to choose what to focus on, what to include and what to leave out of the story is in the total control of those who create the video. Even if the story is about you or it's your story, you are at the mercy of those who are on the operational, decision-making end of the camera.

Many video documentaries and docudramas are made about people to give outsiders an insider look at how they live and think. Or at least how the video producers, writers and directors "perceive" their lives and thoughts through the filter of their own experiences which are often very different in cultural, economic, educational and social terms.

In development videos documenting local or village experience, some attempt is generally made to include the community in some of the content decisions via individual "case history" interviews, focus groups, etc. to determine how local people respond to different issues. This approach is often called "participatory" even though the final product remains in the control of one group of outsiders (the filmmakers) who are often communicating with another group of outsiders (the donors, government agencies or decision makers who commissioned the video).

In practice, videos made in this way often involve a great deal of interaction between those in control of the story and those whose story it actually is. Friendships are formed, food is shared, the storytellers let their subjects look through the camera lens and try to explain the process. The final product is often shown to those who appear in the video so they can see themselves through the eyes of the camera. But even in this interactive approach, the ultimate control of the story remains in the hands of those from outside the community.

Such field documentary work involves a great deal of village cooperation which looks participatory, but the sharing or transferring of power to the community so that people can tell their own story in their own way has not happened. The term "community video" as used in these guidelines implies that *both* the storytelling control and decision-making process are directly in the hands of the community itself.

How Does Community Video Differ From Professional Video?

In a professionally made video, the emphasis is on "product." Often those technically responsible for making the video are simply renting their advanced camera and editing skills to a group that has already done the content needs analysis and decision-making. The entire focus in making the video becomes one of how to make the final product as polished and stylish as possible given budget and time constraints.

In Community Video, the primary emphasis is on "process." In Community Video, those whose

story is being told are also the storytellers and the camera is directly in their hands. Some polished camera work and advanced storytelling techniques may occur in a community made video, but these are a bonus, not the objective of the work itself.

What do we mean by “process?”

When a video group is deciding on how to present their content material through any of several possible video formats, they must first examine the possibilities. Not everything can be included so decisions have to be made on what’s most important in the story. More decisions have to be made about how to arrange the story elements so that they have the most impact on the audience. To accomplish this, the video group must go through a number of steps:

- * Content is examined from every possible angle--analyzing, comparing, critiquing as the story priorities are set
- * A general outline of story points and sequence is made that the video group believes will bring the audience into direct contact with the emotional, human elements of the story
- * The camera work begins
- * Decisions are then made on how to arrange and edit the raw video tape reels so that they best communicate the story to be told, the message points to be made

Professional communicators recognize these steps as the same ones they go through in their work. They learned these steps through sequenced communications training aimed at mastering their craft and creating “state-of-the-art” communications products. Community Video is an empowering tool taking local people into the heart of the communications “process: which is the control of the story itself.

Every step of the storytelling process involved in creating a video is a learning opportunity for villagers to examine their own experiences. “What do I think? Why do I think it? What do I want to say? To whom? How do I want to say it? What response do I want to get?” In Community Video social mobilization fieldwork, educators work closely with the community to facilitate the development of these critical thinking and communication skills in structured activities where the emphasis remains on the “process” itself as a learning experience rather than on the final video product.

This approach to video is confusing to those who are accustomed to thinking of video as a highly skilled and technical art where sophisticated products that surprise and entertain us are the result of our \$\$\$ spent. The result of social mobilization Community Video is the “bottom-up” dialogue that is established between service users and their own intended audience--other service users, service providers, policy makers, etc.

The following pages are guidelines that a Community Video fieldworkers can use in getting to know the community, introducing villagers to video, identifying some of the local

implementation problems that exist, working through some possible solutions, identifying additional support services that villagers need to meet the CFUG goals they've set for themselves.

These guidelines assume a long period of intensive fieldwork lasting from four to six weeks. Actual field testing of these activities by each Community Video extension worker will suggest ways to adapt, eliminate or add to these activities so that they fit the local situation and the time frame of the extension worker. For Community Video to have a lasting impact it needs to be a part of a larger context of critical thinking and communication skill development activities such as those outlined in these field social mobilization guidelines.

II. GETTING TO KNOW THE COMMUNITY (Week One)

These activities, following the formal introductions that are customary in the area you're working, are intended to give you a quick overview of the VDC and their Community Forest User Group (CFUG) from several points of view--the District Forest Office, the CFUG Executive Committee and various forest users. The written, legal information will ground you in the CFUG's history and management operations, but the informal gathering of forest information and local viewpoints will help you assess what implementation barriers exist and why. Your job is not to *tell* the community what you've found to be wrong, but to facilitate the learning process that will take them through their own critical analysis of how the CFUG is working and how they want it to work.

1. Access and Review Local CFUG Documents and History

Become knowledgeable in the official and legal structure of the group so you yourself can compare it to what people actually believe about the "rules and regulations" and "rights and responsibilities" of forest use. In your initial work you need to come to your own conclusions about the following:

- * Are the CFUG members actually implementing the operational plan they set up for themselves when organizing?
- * Are the forest products being shared among members as they'd agreed to do in their CFUG operational plan?
- * Is the plan flexible and responsive to changing community needs?
- * Does the operational plan need revising? And can revision discussions be organized and video documented by the community as part of your fieldwork?

- * Were existing user arrangements and traditional user groups included in the CFUG original operational plan? Are there legitimate complaints that have not yet been addressed by the CFUG membership?
- * Are all members participating equally in the decision-making process or do strong leaders end up dominating and marginalizing others?
- * Does everyone know the existing balance in their CFUG account and are they satisfied with how the funds are being spent?
- * Are group members equally sharing the costs and benefits of local forest use?
- * Is the forest user group getting the extension support and skill training that it wants and needs?

2. Reviewing Forest Use Patterns

In your initial work and for your own understanding, try to get accurate information on forest use patterns. As you walk through the forest and interview local leaders try to determine the following:

- * How have forest conditions and biodiversity changed since the CFUG took over its management?
- * Has forest product availability changed? Is the forest now more or less productive? Is it generating income for the CFUG?
- * What silvicultural treatments (pitting, planting, pruning, singling, thinning, fireline construction, seed collection, nurseries) have been applied and how have they worked?
- * Have CFUG members been introduced to agroforestry techniques and soil conservation?
- * Do CFUG members know how to market and sell their forestry products?
- * Does the user group need help with organizational and management skills? If yes, what help? If no, what lessons learned could they pass on to other communities?

3 . Get The Local Point-Of-View On Their Own CFUG

Hold informal conversations with clan groups to identify the real feelings villagers have about what their own local experience has been with their CFUG and what they themselves see as its successes and failures. How do their views on things correlate with your own observations and initial CFUG research?

Discuss with them the “rules and regulations” and “rights and responsibilities” that you found in their own CFUG written documents. Does this written management plan fit how they actually use the forest? Does it encompass their own vision for how the forest can best be developed to meet the needs of individual villagers and to generate income for improving community services?

Both as you meet with villagers informally and as you work through the following field activities, try to determine the following:

- * Do villagers know how their own CFUG came about?
- * Do they fully understand the steps that were taken to become a registered CFUG?
- * Are they satisfied with the way in which the registration, constitution and management plans were decided?
- * Do they know who took these steps on the community’s behalf and are they happy with the results?
- * Do they feel that those in charge kept the community informed and involved in a democratic way?
- * Do they know what their CFUG constitution says? Can they restate the constitution’s provisions in their own words? Do they think it’s important to understand this document?
- * Do they know the details of their CFUG forest management plan? Can they restate it in their own words? Do they think it’s important that they understand their own CFUG management plan? Has anyone tried to explain it to them?
- * What products do they use from the forest? For what purpose? Where do they find them? Are there any shortages? Is the forest regenerating as it’s being used? If not, why not?
- * Have they personally gained or lost benefits from the registration of the forest as a community owned and managed?
- * Do they agree with how the community forest is being managed?
- * Do they understand the need for “rules and regulations?” Do they know what

these are?

- * How would they change the current management policies?
- * Do any of these problems exist in their forest--lack of plant diversity, deforestation, soil erosion, village basic needs not being met, lack of income opportunities from the forest, grazing interference, fires, theft by members, theft by outsiders, user rights conflicts?
- * How have these problems been dealt with by CFUG leaders?
- * Do they agree with how the problems were handled? What should have been done differently?
- * Have there been boundary disputes from within the VDC user group such as private land vs. communal land disagreements? Have there been boundary disputes from those outside the political VDC area who have traditionally used the forest in the past?
- * What other kinds of local conflicts have occurred over forest usage or CFUG leadership and decision-making?
- * What traditional forestry management knowledge and skills already exist within the community?
- * Are these skills and the traditional knowledge of elderly people being utilized in the village's management of their CFUG activities?
- * Do you know what farmers are doing to solve agricultural and forestry problems in other communities? Does the DFO facilitate farmer-to-farmer communication?
- * What training has the community received in either organization management, financial management or forestry management?
- * Who received this training and was the information shared with everyone in the CFUG?
- * What problems remain that might be addressed by field demonstrations, training workshops, farmer-to-farmer networking and exchange visits?
- * Are women or men the primary users of the forest?
- * Do women have a role in the decision-making process equal to their position as primary forest users?

- * Does your CFUG use a quota system to limit women's participation?
- * Should the quota be based on gender (equal numbers of men and women) or should it be based on who actually does the work (80% women and 20% men)?
- * Has any effort been made to demonstrate to the community how women's participation in rural decision-making has economic benefits for the entire family?
- * What efforts have been made to involve women in village decision-making?
- * What would make it easier for them to participate?
- * What could be done to make the forest more productive and to increase the money the CFUG earns from forest products?
- * Could this be done without damaging the forest itself? If yes, than why isn't it being done?
- * Is there agreement among forest users about what should be done to gradually increase community earnings from forest products?
- * If not, what are the sources of disagreement and how could they be resolved?
- * Is there agreement on how this jointly owned income should be spent?
- * Who makes most of the decisions on CFUG management and finances?
- * If you did not agree with an Executive Committee decision, would you stand up in a CFUG meeting and state your complaint? If no, why not? If yes, would you be listened to?
- * Do you feel the forest truly belongs to the community or do you think it belongs to the government and you're just a caretaker?
- * Are you comfortable with forestry personnel? If not, why not?
- * Are these government representatives respectful of village CFUG rights? Are they still regarded as policemen? Can you trust them to help with your problems?
- * What should be changed in the relationship between the DFO staff and the village CFUG? Is everything as it should be or could it be better?

As you get to know villagers and how they feel about all the different issues raised in this long question list, tell them about your work with Community Video. Would they be willing to

participate in making their own community video letter to be shown at a national forum on community forestry so that decision-makers can hear what they have to say and understand better the realities in village CFUG implementation?

[NOTE: The following anecdotes should be a two-paged box presentation fitted into the above question list to illustrate what village experience has been in relationship to some of the CFUG issues raised in the list. These anecdotes were compiled by Kedar Sharma.]

VILLAGE VOICES

Because all of us in our CFUG are farmers, we set a rule that forest should always be open for cutting we have to do to make our agricultural tools such as ploughs and hoe and axe handles and so on. We all agreed that this was important to us and could be done without damage to the forest. But what we discovered is that not everyone plays fair. Some people started going to the forest every week saying their plough was broken. It takes an entire tree to make a plough and the wood left over from the cutting is used for firewood by that person. We became suspicious when we found out what was happening and discovered that these neighbours were making and selling ploughs to the nearby village along with the extra firewood. We confiscated the ploughs and wood we found and fined each of them Rs.1000/-.

We have a very dense forest in our community, but it's not much help to us. We're not allowed to cut more than a few trees each year and we can't use it for fodder or even get much firewood because the entire forest is pine. There are no other plants and everytime we try to organize to change this, we can't agree on what should be planted or who should benefit. Some people on the CFUG Executive Committee want us to leave the pine forest as it is so that we can harvest and sell it to raise income. But many of us don't believe this income, if it happens, will ever be used to help us.

Now that we manage our own forest, we've been able to establish a number of plants that support a number of bee hives that some of us are setting up in our home gardens. Last year I earned Rs, 50,000/ from my bee colonies and some of my neighbours have done just as well. Because the forest is helping us to earn this money, we are more willing to obey the many rules that we have--don't cut the trees, keep your cattle out of the forest, pay money when you do this and more money when you do that. As long as the plants we need for the bees are protected, we will do our share to help others.

Last year we caught many thieves from the neighbouring village. They were stealing trees from our forest and when we took the trees from them and made them pay a fine they got very angry. Not long ago, a big fire started in our forest in several different places at the same time. Everyone helped to put it out, but much of the forest was damaged. Next day someone told us

that they'd seen the men we'd caught stealing in our forest last year near where the fires had started. We went to the police with this information and they were arrested. We don't know what do since even if we asked them to pay for the damage we know they wouldn't have the money.

My mother and mother-in-law taught me how to use herbs for our health and no one in my family used Dakтары medicines when I was growing up. Unfortunately, my own daughter and daughters-in-law are not interested in traditional herbs. They know very little about the plants or how they're used and I've seen these wives of my sons do things in the forest that harm my plants. They're very dependent on Dakтары medicines and their children are not as healthy as mine were. Why do they turn down the free gift of Mother Nature to pay for medicines that don't work as well? I am now ready to teach everything I learned from older women to anyone who wants to learn since my own family is not interested. I'm worried that when I die this knowledge will die if someone doesn't learn about these plants and how to prepare them.

There are thousands of Kafal trees in our community forest. From March to May there is Kafal for everyone. In the past, we used it individually. Each of on our own collected some, took some to market, but most went to the birds and wild animals. This year we organized to harvest the fruit for sale. The nearby market couldn't use all we produced, so we hired transport and everyday we took from five to ten loads to town. Our CFUG earned Rs.102,157 net profit from our decision to work together in the harvest. And everyone, had some fruit for their families as well. We plan to use this profit money to help us get electricity or better drinking water.

I am a Chunaro. Our traditional job is to make different types of wooden pots for different uses. We used to operate our tools with a water mill. These days there are not enough good trees for us to make pots. Many people from our group have left for Terai where they are working mainly as agricultural labourers. Three years ago, I asked our CFUG to give us a chance to continue our traditional job and preserve our traditional skills. They agreed to let us use medium class trees which they would cut anyway to help thin the forest. Now we are again making small pots, cups and other items and we've been able to keep our traditions alive. We earn some money from what we make and we also pay the CFUG for the use of these trees which were going to be cut and used for firewood. Now everyone is happy.

Election is probably the best way to choose people to be in charge, but there are problems if the choice turns out to be a bad one. Last year, for example, there was a fire in our community forest. Our CFUG chairman made little effort to investigate it. He did not report it to the District Headquarter or seek help from the DFO or the police. We thought he'd done these things, but found out later that he had not. Now we are putting pressure on him to resign so we can elect someone who really cares about the forest. Our chairman claims that he gets nothing for his work on our behalf and that he has no benefits at all from his service. If this is so, why won't he resign? We are sure he is secretly taking advantage of his position and are going to ask the DFO to help us.

For the first five years after we took over managing our forest, we just protected it from grazing and cutting. The forest grew really wild and the trails were hard to use. There were saplings here and there, but bigger plants were keeping them from growing. One of the boys from our

village was studying forestry in Metauda Campus and when he was home on holiday he suggested that we do some thinning and pruning. He helped us to make arrangements with the DFO to send some forestry people to teach us how to make our forest more productive, how to help our trees grow straight and tall, how to encourage the growth of new plants that would help us in many ways. Now we've divided our forest into four blocks and we are thinning them every other year. Everyone agrees that the forest is easier to use now and more productive than ever.

I am the Chairman of our CFUG. We recently caught three people from a nearby village cutting nigalo from our protected forest. We took all the nigalos from them and fined them Rs.300./each. They went to the VDC and filed a complaint against us saying that we physically harmed them and took their watches and coins. Politically, the VDC Chairman is closer to them so he is trying to use this to create problems for us. We did not harm these men, but the Chairman knows we know nothing about the written CFUG rules and regulations. He can twist them to make us do what he wants. It's our forest and we work hard to protect it, but now we are afraid for the future.

Last week the CFUG members of a nearby village confiscated my daughter's sickle and fined her Rs.10 for cutting grass. We have animals and there is no grass anywhere else that we can use. The CFUG is monopolizing the whole forest that we used to share. They say they are protecting it and at first we were happy. Then we learned that we can't use the forest because we're in Ward No. 5 and it's only to be used by people in Ward No. 4. This is not fair. We have some barren land in our ward and we've recently started to develop it by protecting it from grazing and cutting. But it will take at least five years before we can get any benefit from it. What are we to do in the meantime?

I'm a landless woman with three children and a teenage sister-in-law who stays with us. My husband is a tailor. I help him in his work, do all the household work and take care of the children. We are surviving, but we have no extra money to pay for everyday things from the forest. We've stayed in this village for more than 18 months and there's a very good community forest here. All the villagers can take dry branches for firewood and grass for fodder--all except us. I went to the CFUG chairman and requested a limited right to use the forest since we live and work here. They said the rules do not permit it. What can I do? Should we eat raw food? I think we should have some right to this public land. After all, we're Nepali citizens too.

Our CFUG chairman never forgets to call on us if there is any task to be done. But he never remembers us when there are invitations for training or observation tours. He himself has received many trainings and so have many of our executive committee members. Perhaps the DFO and others in headquarters think they are the only people in this village since they're the only ones who ever see them. Don't they realize that the ordinary farmer is important to making community forestry work? Why don't they insist that we be involved in the opportunities to learn?

III. INTRODUCING VILLAGERS TO VIDEO (Week One)

One way to informally gather some of the information in Section Two is to carry your video camera with you as you meet different clan groups in the village in their own compounds and in other small group gatherings in different regions of the VDC.

I. Videotaping For Fun

As you move through the community during your orientation work, invite those you meet to do something funny for the camera or to give a personal greeting to others in the community. Tape scenes in the compound, in the garden area, in the forest--wherever you meet people--then focus the camera on individuals in the scene for their greetings. Let those you talk with know that the tape will be shown (when and where) so they can see themselves and their neighbours on camera.

If it would add interest to the tape and if you have the time, set up several small group sessions where people are invited to respond to an entertaining theme such as "tell a funny story from your childhood"... "Describe something bad that happened to you and the valuable lesson that you learned from the experience"... "Bring an object (plant, rock, household, personal, etc.) that's important to you and tell us why." Record these sessions on tape for entertaining playback during your work.

2. Invite the Community to a Video Show

Choose a convenient time and place where members of the community can come together easily to see themselves and their neighbours on video and to formally learn what you are doing. Because the playback screen is small, you may need to invite people to come in several small group sessions if the area you're working in has a large population. If this is the case you will need to decide in the field how best to set up the showing, when, and for whom.

Play the videos that you've made during your first week in the community. You can stop and start the tape as they want so that the experience is as entertaining for the audience as possible. From both your personal observations and interaction with the audience try to determine what they are actually seeing, what do they think about it, how do they feel about being taped and seeing themselves on tape.

Explain to them that you're in their community to give them a chance to learn to use the camera themselves so that they can tell outsiders about themselves and how they live. Explain that they'll be making a lot of different videos while you're living with them and one of them will be very important to their community forest. Tell them about the forestry forum and the kinds of policy and decision-makers who will be there. Tell them that after they've learned how to use the camera to express themselves, they'll have a chance to make a video letter to send to this

meeting so that those outsiders can hear what they have to say about community forest management policies.

Explain some of the activities you're planning to do over the next few weeks and encourage their enthusiastic cooperation. If immediate playback is possible in this session, film a few minutes of audience reaction to the video you've made of them and let them see for themselves how powerful and engaging video can be.

IV. INTRODUCING VILLAGERS TO HANDS-ON CAMERA WORK EXPLORING THEIR OWN COMMUNITY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE FOREST (Weeks Two and Three)

The following activities offer the community a number of opportunities to be involved in small group hands-on video activities. Beginning with a village mapmaking activity to provide a context for all of the video work, the work then divides into homogenous group work. These are only suggested groups and topics which you'll need to adapt to fit the realities you find in the field.

1. Making Village Maps

Before beginning the village hands-on camera work, have a representative group of village CFUG members (men, women, leaders, farmers, landless) walk with you through their Village Development Committee including the residential community, common meeting sites and community forest, nurseries and plantations. As you document the forest walk on video, have them introduce you to the physical characteristics of the land, the social and economic relationships in the village, how forest products are actually used, the current health of the forest and the plans villagers have for it. Use this opportunity to add to your knowledge of the community and to exchange information with them if they have questions for you.

Before you begin the walk, have the group develop a large sketch map of what you're going to see. The map can be made on the ground using a stick in the dirt for easy correction. Later, if a large supply of paper is available for taping together, you can use drawing pens. Film the CFUG group as different members contribute to the map. Be sure everyone in the group contributes, especially when the sketch work is illustrating the area they know best. Continue filming the group as they work documenting both the growing map and the interaction of group members. The sketch map should include the following:

- * Major geographical features such as cliffs, ridges, streams, bridges, roads, trails

- * VDC villages and hamlets with common buildings such as temples, schools, water taps

- * Clan compounds showing livestock stalls, grazing lands and private agricultural lands
- * Healthy Forests, degraded forests, plantations, nurseries

The sketch map should have names, an arrow showing “north,” and some attempt should be made by the mapmakers to keep things in scale. If they’re working with sticks in the earth it’s easy to erase mistakes and start over. If the VDC is really too large for a single map, you can do several maps. First, make a large overview showing a general outline of the forests, villages, and recognizable geographical and manmade features with their names. Then make detail maps of specific villages, clan groups and forests.

The purpose of this exercise is both to document on video the village you’re working in for outsiders and as a video resource tool for village meetings discussing CFUG issues during your work there. If villagers have made permanent maps on paper, these should remain with them for their own use in the future.

During this exercise you can plan how best to organize the following hands-on camera activities with different segments of the community. It is common for young people, especially young men to dominate in media activities, but every effort should be made in this project to avoid this. Community Video as used in this project is intended to be a “voice” for all members of the community--especially those who are normally marginalized (women, poor people, low caste members, etc.). To help bring this about, the following hands-on activities are divided into common groups rather than broad segment groups. For example, women will work with women, the landless and poor with their own, etc. until everyone is comfortable using the camera and expressing themselves through video. The final Community Video Letter should represent the views of all the different stakeholders in the community forests including those who for various reasons are not now CFUG members.

2. Filming Daily Life

Women’s Work

What is village life from a woman’s point of view? Women are often the farmers, the foresters, the water and wood porters, food preparers, the washer, ironer, and the personal caretaker of their children and their husbands. Very few rural women have leisure time or time to take care of their own personal needs. In the community where you are working, how do most adult women spend their day? How would they like to see labour redistributed so that they have more time to take an active role in community affairs as well as have some time for income-generating activities?

Find a time when a typical group of women can get together to discuss making a video of their daily tasks. Share with them how the camera works, let them record a few scenes and explain the purpose of trying to document on videotape how hard they work and the problems they must cope with for family survival.

Ask women the following: Are they willing to put their story on video so that others can see how hard they work and how much they achieve with such small resources? How can they make their video without serious disruption to their duties? Work through the logistics with them of how they can record important episodes from their daily life--gathering firewood, building fires, drawing water, preparing and cooking food, preparing bath water, cleaning, planting and harvesting, gathering fodder, feeding livestock, tending to children, etc.

Discuss with them the following: What are their chores, their responsibilities? How do these vary from season to season? How do they manage their time? Who helps them? Do they help each other by sharing childcare so that different women are free at different times to do the things that are difficult to do with young children? Do husbands help? Did they go to school themselves? Did they want an education? How is life difficult without reading, writing and counting skills? Have they found ways to learn these on their own? How do they feel about education for their daughters? Is it important to them? What are they doing to try to make this happen?

If they are willing, let them choose a woman from their group to film the discussion. If this proves too disruptive or inhibiting, set the camera aside and continue the logistics planning until there is a consensus on what to do and when to do it.

Work with the woman's group for several days, teaching them how to use the camera as they themselves record and document their daily life. Show them how to focus, how to erase if they want to redo, etc. The objective is not a flawless video, but for community women to have the experience of examining their own lives through the camera lens. You can suggest scenes and encourage the group to suggest scenes trying to achieve as much freedom of expression within the group, comfort with your presence and with each other as you can. Continue to emphasize that the important thing is the story they want to tell about themselves, that the camera is to serve them not rule them, that they should use it in whatever way they think will make their story the strongest one possible.

Before deciding how to tell their story, they should first discuss who the audience for the story will be--other women only to encourage women's unity, for the entire community to involve them in a dialogue about labour-sharing? Deciding to whom the story of women's life in the village is being told and what points should be made will help group members decide what to include in the video.

Let the women's video group choose whether they want a single narrator to take them to different women doing different tasks with the narrator interviewing each woman to find out how long it takes to do each chore, how many times a day she must do it, who helps her, and so on. Or, do they want each woman to demonstrate and describe a specific task on her own so that many different women speak on camera? Or do they want to do something different that they themselves think would be best? What do they want to say about their problems, their hopes for their children, their fears as the video is being made? Explain that there are many, many different ways to tell the same story and that the choice is theirs to make.

When the video is finished, ask the group whether they want to show it to the entire community

or to other women only. If they show it to other women only, it's an opportunity for women to further define themselves and their role in the community as other women from outside the video group comment on the story of village women and add missing elements that they think are missing. Ask them if they think their "voice" in the community is equal to the amount of labour they do. Should it be? Is it important to them that it be? What does the community--men, women, families, and the larger social group--lose when women's experiences and viewpoints are not fully represented? If women have chosen to show their video to the entire community, this last question is particularly relevant and should be discussed by men and women alike.

A Man's World

What is village life from a man's point of view? How do most men spend their days? How would they change this if they could? What are men's family chores? What labour do they do outside the home to earn income? How is this income used by the family? How do men spend their free time? Can they earn a living in the village or are they forced to leave home and work for outside employers? What difficulties do they face in daily life? What solutions have they tried to increase the health and wealth of their family? What would they advise community leaders to do to strengthen the well-being of the village? What do they see as their children's futures?

How do men work together to help their wives so that the family unit is more efficient? Or, do they have strong beliefs in maintaining traditional labour according to gender? What events or severe hardships (sickness, death, natural disasters such as droughts, earthquakes, crop failures) have occurred in their own family or in the community that have forced them to be more involved in helping their wives?

Organize a representative group of men who would like to make a video describing village life from men's experiences. Take them through the same steps as described above in "Women's Work," leaving the decision-making of what the video story should include, how and when to do it, and to whom they want to show it up to the men participating.

From A Child's Point-Of-View

In many rural communities, children contribute substantially to family labour--especially girls. Work with a representative group of young adolescents to tell the story of what it's like to grow up in this village. What are your family chores? What opportunities do you have for school learning? What things have you learned from your parents and grandparents? What do you do for fun? Will you stay in the village when you grow up? If no, where do you want to go? If yes, how will your life be different from your parents? How will you earn a living? Will you have a big family or a small one? Why? Will you try to keep the forest and agriculture lands as your parents have done or do you want to change things? Take youngsters in this video group through the same steps that women and men have done in making and showing their video.

Elderly Wisdom

In the haste to develop new technologies and tools for coping with overpopulation and diminishing resources, indigenous wisdom can easily be left behind. Old people continue with

what they've learned from their parents and grandparents, but these skills are not always transferred as young adults try to become "modern." Try to organize a group of elderly men and women to make a video describing what's being lost in new technologies. For example, traditional medicinal herbs, native plant diversity, old methods of conservation and regeneration, etc. In new programmes introduced by government and donor projects, are traditional user groups, social relationships, indigenous knowledge and skills accurately included or have serious mistakes been made that end up hurting the community? Have your children and grandchildren made full use of what you've tried to preserve from the past? For example, do they recognize native plants and know how to maintain them? Do they recognize medicinal herbs and know how to collect, correctly use and regenerate them? Can this group use the video camera to demonstrate what they believe the community should not allow to be lost?

Take this group through the same decision-making and hands-on camera steps that other groups have followed in making and showing their video.

The Burdens Of Leadership

Try to form a video group of community leaders--the headman and others such as village committee presidents and others who have responsibilities for the schools, healthcare and other services in the community. What do they see as the community's successes, failures, resources, needs, problems, possible solutions? What are their difficulties in leadership? What do they do to bring different members of village society together in dialogue? Work with the leaders in the same way you've worked with other video groups to let them decide what story they want to tell about the village, to whom, when and in what way. Suggest some options such as a walk through village sites pointing out problems, solutions in action, with specific examples of how different village management decisions were made,

Documenting CFUG Successes and Failures

If you have a group of highly motivated young people who would like to try their hand at making a video documentary, bring them together to discuss how they can best examine the way in which their local CFUG works and how different members of the community feel about their CFUG? Is it or is not representing their views? Is it or is it not meeting their needs?

This activity differs from the others in that the filmmakers are a single story trying to document many different viewpoints, including those that are in conflict. They are recording their own community's experiences, but they're doing this as "objective" documentation of the views of their relatives and neighbors, and not as their own point-of-view. To do this, they need to decide for themselves the following:

- * Who belongs to the CFUG?
- * Who uses the forest or used the forest in the past, but is not a CFUG member and why?
- * Who are the CFUG leaders?
- * How many different kinds of forest users are there and for what purpose (women

for household, farmers, traditional healers, entrepreneurs, carpenters, blacksmiths, craftsmen, livestock owners, and so on including people from different economic groups and how their needs differ--subsistence needs for the landless, expansion needs for the well-off, etc.)

- * Does the current CFUG management plan serve all the different user needs that exist in the community? Have some been left out? Are their complaints being addressed?
- * Who guards the forest? How is the DFO involved?
- * What grows in the forest? Who uses it? Is there surplus? Who benefits from it?
- * Is the forest regenerating and healthy or slowly degrading?
- * Do CFGU members agree on their goals for the community forest's future, on its management and on how the forest income is being spent?
- * What is better now than it was before the CFUG?
- * What is worse now than it was before the CFUG?

The group working on this video documentary should decide together how to tell the overall story of the CFUG and how to include the individual interviews that illustrate the reality of how well the management plan is or is not working. The video should try to be "balanced" and get everybody's point-of-view--the DFO workers involved in the community, the village leaders, the CFUG executive committee and the various users. A special effort should be made to seek out the views of those who are most often left out of the decision-making process--women, the poor, the landless.

When to show the video footage and to whom is a decision to be made by the video documentary group with the approval of those who appear on camera. This could be an excellent change for a general meeting of the entire CFUG and relevant DFO staff to analyze their own experiences together and to attempt to sincerely address some mistakes from the past as well as the implementation barriers that remain.

Another useful tool for looking at how decisions are made, who dominates at meetings, whose views are ignored and how conflicts are handled would be available to the CFUG if the above meeting to discuss issues raised by the documentary is also filmed. Neither the documentary itself or the video of the CFUG meeting are intended to create anger or splits in the community that would only damage the often fragile relationships that now exist. The CFUG must be ready to examine its own management and open to trying to see that everyone's needs are met by the user group's policies. Mediators from within the community itself, those who are not viewed as politically motivated but are wise leaders that village people from all points of view and all levels of community life can respect should be deeply involved in the CFUG's decision to

review the documentary. They should lead the way in seeing that the documentary's content and the video recording the CFUG meeting to discuss it have positive outcomes for the organization and are not destructive to the user group's ability to form a consensus.

V. CREATING DEBATES, SKITS, STORY DRAMAS AND SONGS ABOUT THE FOREST AND HOW IT'S USED FOR A COMMUNITY VIDEO PERFORMANCE EVENT (Weeks Four and Five)

This activity is a collaboration between those who create and perform the dramas and those who record it on video. The objective is to involve everyone in the VDC area either as performer or as audience participant to act out on stage some of the conflicts that exist in the community over forest usage and the CFUG management of this shared resource. This is not traditional folk drama, although traditional songs and stories can be included in the performance event. The intent is to create short skits, dramas and songs that illustrate different perspectives in the community about whether or not the forest is meeting their immediate needs and whether or not its full potential for generating shared income is being realized.

Facilitating the Drama

To fulfill the cast needs of the different stories to be performed, the drama group will need to include women and men from various age groups. Organize the group, work out your creative and performance logistics with them so that everybody agrees on when the performers will meet to turn their ideas into dramas, when the performance event will be and where, etc.

Identifying Dramatic Conflicts and Story Themes

To start the drama group on its creative work, show them the documentary video footage of villager interviews describing their experiences with the CFUG. The personal stories in these interviews will help start the process of identifying local conflicts that can be explored in short dramas. In the group discussion begin making a list of local problems that could be dramatized. For example:

1). Illiteracy

Not being able to read the original registration and forest management documents has left most villagers confused about who owns the forest, who can and can't join the CFUG, what their rights are as CFUG members and what the user group responsibilities are.

2). Exclusion Of Women

Women are the primary forest users, but they're not taken seriously in the decision-making process, are not encouraged to speak out on issues or to take an active role in managing the forest.

3). Conflicts

There are constant disputes over who owns the forest, who has the right to use it, what is private land and what is community forest as a result of the VDC boundary decisions that often disrupt traditional use patterns.

4). Flawed Management Plans

Management plans have often failed to include the needs of craftsmen such as blacksmiths who have special requirements from the forest if they're to make the tools that everyone in the community needs.

5). Misuse Of The Forest

Misuse of the forest--theft by outsiders as well as members; the helping themselves to more than their share by those who are in power; grazing livestock; fire; etc. are all continuing problems in spite of the penalties and services of a community hired forest guard.

6). Mismanagement By CFUG Leaders

Mismanagement by CFUG executive committees who take training opportunities for themselves, who keep account records secretly and for their own use, who dominate the decision-making process rather than encourage full democratic participation by everyone and who allow party politics to operate within the organization.

7). DFO Support Limitations

DFO support limitations which have failed to enact the farmer-to-farmer networking, the use of indigenous knowledge especially that of older people, the skill-building field demonstrations by extension workers--timber management, soil conservation, silvaculture, plant diversity, agroforestry, etc., the literacy classes, organizational management training and assistance with identifying income generating opportunities from forest products.

Ask drama group members to expand on these themes based on their own experiences and observations of how the CFUG has worked for their family and their neighbors. Are there other problem areas not included in these broad categories that might be entertaining drama?

[NOTE: Include a two-paged box spread in the above section based on story anecdotes prepared by Kedar Sharma illustrating many aspects of village life related to the forest.

VILLAGE VOICES

We have a good forest near our village but the wild boars are destroying our crops. They come out at night, dig out all the potatoes and tubers and eat the food plants. Previously it was

completely prohibited to catch or kill wild boars. Now we're legally allowed to do that if they're in our fields, but there's still a lot of confusion. Last month, we caught and killed a wild boar in my Uncle's field. Everyone in the village knew we'd done that. It was no secret. But then we were called to the DFO office and accused of killing the beast in the forest. We protested, but still we were fined Rs.1000. The government is quick to protect wild animals, but what about my family? Who will help us?

When our forest land was barren, no one in the village was interested in conservation work. Several of us started a nursery and were guarding it from grazing and cutting and slowly it began to grow again. We struggled with the DFO for its handover and now everyone wants to benefit from what we started although very few people are willing to work as hard as we do. Last month, we had to choose a new Chairperson. There were three candidates from three major parties. Only one of the candidates was active in forest protection work, but he lost. The election turned into a political party war and the CFUG members voted strictly party lines. The man who won knows nothing about the forest and only cares about what his new job can do for him. It's hard to stay involved with the CFUG when decisions are not made based on ability and interest in the forest.

We are landless people. Like other landless families we chose this corner of the forest to stay. We have settled on a small piece of land just big enough for a little house and kitchen garden. But the permanent villagers want us to leave the forest. They say they've formed a CFUG and it's theirs. But what about us? We live here too and have been here for several years. All we have is this little garden. We own nothing so we have nothing to lose by fighting the CFUG. Don't they realize that instead of making us enemies of the community forest, they should involve us in helping to protect it by leaving us in this little corner?

There's a fast growing fodder tree that matures in ten years and can be easily propagated. I brought branches of this species from a hill site and started a nursery in my garden. When these began to grow, I cut many branches and gave them to my neighbours. We decided to plant them in a barren border of the forest. These plants are now providing good cattle fodder for the village, but they're also helping to control soil erosion by covering an area that was formerly bare.

My village has no forest. We desperately need one. There's a huge barren area near our village that used to be a forest, but that's not public land and we can't use it. Many years ago when a field survey team came here, our village chief registered the land as his personal property. He's too important and too rich for us to take him to court. We've asked him to let us use the land, but he keeps saying he has plans for it. What plans? It's now been twenty years since he took the land and it's been bare ground ever since.

When our CFUG was forming a committee for conservation, they came to me and asked me to be on the committee. I was very happy. I've worked in the forest all my life and I know many things that could help us. When I tried to participate and ask questions in the meeting, however, I was ignored. I decided to leave the committee, but when I went to tell the Chairman he said I have to stay since they must have at least one woman on the committee by law. I told him I'd stay if I could have a say when the decisions were made. He started asking me many

questions about the forestry constitution, the rules and regulations, rights and responsibilities-- questions which he knew I could not answer since no one has ever explained these things to us. He shamed me and insisted I do what I was told to do.

My neighbors and I are ordinary farmers. We are CFUG members, but we are not on the management committee. We all worked hard to develop a healthy forest and we badly need the few things we're allowed to take in return. But we are angry that the management committee is selling off forest resources without asking us. Recently they sold 80 big trees without a vote by the group. Can they do this? We don't know. We questioned them and they told us we should not interfere with them while they're in office. They claimed that all the things they do are for the entire community's benefits. But we doubt this. We think they are pocketing much of the money they receive from forest sales. We ask how much is in the treasury and what it's going to be used for, but we keep getting different answers. We don't trust them and things are very bad.

I am a blacksmith and must have charcoal which I can only get from the forest. This is how I earn my income, but also the farmers here need the tools I make. But everytime we go to the forest, we are very scared. The forest guard or the police arrest us and take our money. We are willing to pay for what we take, but when they made the management plan, they forgot us and now they say it's too late to change. Is this true?

I am 13 years old and away in school most of the year. But when I'm on summer vacation, I collect seedlings for different type for replanting in the forest where there are no seedlings. There is a forest nursery in a nearby village, but my grandfather says that nature is the best nursery. There are many seedlings in the wild and my grandfather says that when we take some, we are also helping the plants we leave behind.

I got two trees from our community forest to repair my house. I called two of the local carpenters. But they wasted most of the wood because of the tools they use. I think those who want to help us with timber management should also help us learn modern carpentry skills so we can stop wasting the trees we cut.

I am a woman of 38 and very interested in our community forest. I wanted to be on a CFUG committee and asked for an assignment. I was told that the quota for women members is already filled and I should wait for another term. What are they talking about? Quotas? Do they put quotas on women when they send us out to do the family work? Doesn't anyone realize that most forest users are women? We are the ones who collect fodder and firewood and spend a lot of time getting to know the forest in this work. I don't want to be a committee member for money or fame. I just want to take what I know and use it to be sure that the forest continues to meet our daily needs.

I am the treasurer of our CFUG and am finding my job more and more difficult. In the beginning there was almost no money and my knowledge was enough to manage. Now we have more than Rs.60,000 and I need help to learn how to keep our books properly. The DFO is always

complaining about what I do, but when I ask for help they say nothing. There are people in this village who are better educated than I am, but they would expect a good salary for this work--a percentage of what the forest earns. None of us wants that to happen. My neighbours here know they can trust me, but I'm worried that 'll make a big mistake and be blamed for theft.

Our forest is in school lands because our grandparents handed it over to the school a long time ago thinking it would be safer in their hands. But all of us use this forest and think of it as community property. We recently heard that the school is going to sell all the old trees from the forest to raise money for the school. This scares us. Our water source is in this forest and we've always used it to get grass, forest fruits, medicinal herbs and firewood for our families. We are protesting, but we're told we have no legal rights and the school committee has offered us no help.

Guidelines For Group Drama Work

These are some of the things to keep in mind as you try to facilitate the creation of short skits, dramas and songs for the performance event:

1. The story plot, sequence and characters should be agreed on and the goal of the drama fully understood by the cast so that their improvised dialogue is both entertaining to the audience and true to the problem illustrated by the performance.
2. Once the story is decided on by the drama group, the question should be asked, "From whose viewpoint should we tell the story?" The following is an example of different aspects of the very same story:

Ram Bahadur comes back to his home village after a long absence and brings a new skill from which he hopes to earn a living. He makes beautiful baskets and other crafts from bamboo and from "nigalo." These are things local people have made for years for their own use, but Ram Bahadur has learned out to make them attractive so that foreign visitors and others want to buy them. What he discovers is that he does not have sufficient bamboo in his own field and that the forest where he might acquire them is a community forest which prohibits cutting the number of bamboo he needs. He appeals to the VDC who ask the CFUG to give Ram a contract to train six local young people in this skill with bamboos that they cut from the community forest. Ram agrees to pay Rs.500 per month to the CFUG for using up to 50 bamboos for resale as craft products he and his trainees make. The group quickly makes a name for itself in the marketplace and the trainees have expanded their own efforts by planting bamboos in the corners of their own fields.

Hari Prasad is a neighbor of Ram Bahadur and he is not happy about the CFUG arrangements with him. He believes the contract was awarded because of a handsome bribe to the VDC chief and

to the CFUG Executive Committee chief. Hari's brother works in the District Headquarters and he is determined to seek his help in protesting the contract award. Hari believes that the large number of bamboos being used by Ram Bahadur and his trainees each month is causing shortages for other villagers who also need bamboo for their agricultural tools and domestic baskets. He believes that the Rs.500 that Ram pays is not enough compensation for the hardship he is causing others. Hari also wants an exact accounting of the income Ram Bahadur is receiving from his craft sales and how much he pays his trainees. He is convinced that Ram is personally benefiting at the expense of his neighbors and that the young people Ram is working with are being used poorly by him. Hari Prasad is intent on getting the CFUG contract with Ram Bahadur ended as soon as possible!

Share this story with the drama group and ask them to expand on the story further by adding the views of at least two trainees that he is working with in the bamboo craft project, How do they feel? How are their views different from one another?

This example is an opportunity for the drama group to look at all sides of the stories they're creating so they decide exactly whose story they are telling. This could be a dramatic success story of how the community forest was used to support a local skill training project for young people or it could be an equally dramatic story of how the CFUG was manipulated by bribes and party politics--depending on your point-of-view.

It could also be a conflict drama where both sides of the story are pitted against each other with the flaws on each side of the argument eventually exposed and a resolution reached that is satisfactory to the general membership of the forest user group--if not entirely pleasing to either Ram Bahadur or to Hari Prasad.

3. In planning the drama, emphasis should be on quickly moving the story from one event to the next so that the question, "What happens next?" is constantly being answered. If lots of irrelevant details and unnecessary dialogue are included in the drama, it will be too long to fit in the performance time allowed for it and may end up confusing the audience about the story's meaning.
4. Develop from three to six short dramas for a community performance event, depending on how motivated the community is to create and record their own video dramas. The dramas should vary in content so that a variety of issues are explored in the drama video. Several examples of short dramas are included in this section to help spark your own ideas. Theme songs, such as one pleading for group unity for community strength, can also be created and included in the drama performance. These songs can follow traditional music styles or pop music styles depending on locally available instruments and audience preference.

[NOTE: Include the following examples of interesting improvisational dramas as boxed features in this section, based on anecdotes prepared by Kedar Sharma.]

THE VILLAGE CHIEF IS THE THIEF

The headman's daughter comes to him with a problem. She needs timber for a new house. But she lives in another village and doesn't have any right to use her father's community forest. Her father explains that he's already used his own personal timber quota for the year and that it would be against the rules to allow an outsider to cut timber for use in another village. But his daughter pleads with her parents and explains the hardship she is facing in her husband's village. Without this timber, the children will again be exposed to bad weather in the makeshift hovel where they are staying while the house is being built. She needs a lot of wood, but if he will only cut two small trees for her she can at least protect the children.

The headman is deeply concerned about his responsibility to the forest, but his wife asks him what's the point of carrying the burdens of the entire village if they can't even help their own daughter.

The next day the forest guard hears the sound of cutting and sawing. He gets some villagers to go with him to investigate and they are shocked to find their own chief cutting trees without a permit. One tree is already down and the second one is near to fall. The chief explains his problem, reasserts that after all he is the chief and offers to compensate the CFUG by reducing his own quota for the coming year. The rules call for a CFUG meeting to discuss the violation and to decide the penalty. The chief feels that an exception should be made in his case, but the CFUG Executive Committee leaders persuade him that any special favors publicly given to him would cause the village to lose confidence in the CFUG and soon everyone would be breaking the rules. He argues his case with them, but they tell him that if he does not submit to the democratic rules of the community forest that they will be forced to bring the issue to the District Headquarters and this could affect him in the coming local election. The chief accepts that even he must obey the rules and his axe, hand saw and the cut trees go to the CFUG treasury.

When the violation is brought before the CFUG committee, they refuse the chief's offer of reducing his quota for the following year in exchange for the right to use the two trees he has cut. The committee refuses this offer saying that if they agree, everyone will be wanting credit against their next year's quotas. This would cause serious bookkeeping problems for the committee and would also be risking the health of the community forest. What applies to one must apply to all if the democratic foundation of the CFUG is to remain strong. The headman wants to protest, but he remembers the problems he would then face in the next election. He dramatically offers to pay the full penalty set for his mistake and later on tells the village that he did it willingly to set a good example for the entire community.

The news that "The chief is a thief!" quickly spreads throughout the area. Some villagers sympathize with him for trying to put the best face on the situation and know that the family pressures had led him to make this mistake. Others are cynical that he has given in to the committee for votes and doesn't really believe that the rules should apply to him as they do to others.

TURNING THORNS INTO PEARS

The village has just learned that the District Forest Office is handing over its adjacent forest tier to the local CFUG. Members are excited because this is a big area of land and they are debating among themselves the different needs that this new area could meet. Some would like to see it planted in this and others want that. A few men decide to go and investigate the site for themselves.

What the men find is that most of the land is heavily covered with "Mayal," a good for nothing thorny tree that is difficult to get rid of once its grown. The men discuss how they could clear the land for new plants. They agree to organize the CFUG members to begin chopping down the Mayal trees as soon as possible. On the way back to the village they pass a group of women returning with household loads of deadwood collected in the forest. Some of their own wives are in the group and they greet the women enthusiastically. They discuss the good news about the DFO's land grant to the community. But wait, say the women, "What about the Mayal trees?" The men assure them that they'll take care of the problem as soon as possible. One woman asks them what they're planning to do. She starts to tell them what her experience has been with Mayal trees, but the men silence her by mocking her for interfering in men's work--thinking! She should go back to her own physical labour where brains aren't necessary and leave the tough problems to their husbands.

The men leave and the women laugh as they try to imagine the solutions their husbands might have come up with for getting rid of the Mayal trees. They have much more experience with the forest than the men do and they have never been able to completely destroy the nuisance trees even though they've tried many different ways.. The sturdy trees always manage to sprout again from the remaining trunks or roots. The women talk about how they're used for the dirty work, but are seldom included in the decision-making where the lessons they've learned from first-hand experience would be useful. They talk about how this makes them feel personally and how ultimately everyone loses when those with useful knowledge are ignored.

Some weeks later, the CFUG members are meeting and the men's committee assigned the job of clearing out the Mayal trees were asked to give a progress report. Their spokesman sadly told the

group that they were failing. First they'd chopped down the trees, but they'd quickly resprouted and would soon grow back. Then they'd tried burning several of the stumps as a test, but had discovered that new growth was coming from the underground roots. They could try to dig up the entire land area, but the CFUG soon decided that the amount of labour involved would be too costly to the community compared to what they might expect the land to produce for them in the near future. One of the few women in the meeting, stood up to speak. The men made jokes about her talking, but she continued. She explained that the women of the village had met to discuss the problem of the Mayal trees since they already knew that the land would not be easily cleared from their own attempts to get rid of the trees in the past. They had learned from one of their daughters married to another village that a miracle could be created from the chopped Mayal trunks in the forest. What is this miracle? We can attach branches from pear trees and the trees will bear fruit. The men burst out laughing at the women's foolishness in believing such wild tales.

Several months later, the men again visit the Mayal forest to restudy the problem. In one corner, they discover that the Mayal trees there have been tampered with and appear to be changing into pear trees? What witchcraft is this? They hear a sound and discover three women hiding. The women pretend they know nothing but the men insist on an explanation. They explain that one of them went with the mother to her married daughter's village where they were turning Mayal trees into pear trees and they had learned how to do it from the extension worker they found there. He'd explained how Mayal trees and pear trees are from the same family and that's why this grafting one to the other was possible. The women tell the village men that this small corner is their first experiment and if it proves to be successful, they intend to present it to the CFUG so the entire area with the chopped Mayal trees can become fruitful. The men are reluctant to admit that they've learned something from women, but the women know they've done well. They tell themselves that in the future they won't be so shy to speak up when they know that they can be of real help to the village.

-
5. Work with the drama group and the community leaders to decide when and where to stage the performance of the short plays and songs the group has created. Depending on village resources and interest, this can either be done as a festival day or as a simple late afternoon performance. Let the community decide what they want to do.
 6. The performances are intended to be discussion starters to further involve community members in analyzing how the forest is being used and how things can be improved to make life better for everyone. Invite the audience to say what their own experiences have been with the conflict or theme of each drama and song performed in the show. Especially in performances of conflict negotiation skits, invite people to join the performers and change the dialogue or outcome to what *they* think would or should happen in this situation.

7. Either you film, or some of the video group you've been working with should film the performances for playback and further discussion at a later time.

[NOTE: Also include several examples of songs such as one about "unity" ---divided we fall, united we stand--as side bar boxed items in the above section on creating video drama.]

VI. COMMUNITY VIDEO LETTER DECISION-MAKING (Week Five)

Now is the time to mobilize the community to make the decisions about what they want to say to the National Forestry Forum and how they want to say it so that it will make an impact on the policy-makers who see it. These people, whom they've never met and who have never met them, make decisions that greatly affect village life. Through this Community Video Letter they can make their voices heard and their needs known.

What Is A Video Letter?

Ask the group how many of them have relatives who live or work far away? How do they communicate with them? If they send a written letter are they able to write it themselves or do they send their news through a professional letter writer? When their relative receives it, can he or she read it or does someone read it for them?

A video letter is different than a written letter--even one you write yourself. It's your own words, but it's also your face, voice, body movements and emotions as well. To the person on the other end, it's more real, more immediate, more powerful. They not only hear what you have to say, but they can see how you are feeling about what you're telling them.

Why Make A Video Letter For Policy Makers?

Why try to tell strangers from city desks what your life is like in the rural villages of Nepal? Will they understand? Will they care? Will they take some actions that will make a difference? You cannot promise a positive response, but you can promise that their voices will be heard and their problems will be discussed. If they can focus on genuine issues and can explain why something is working and why other things are not working--in their own words and from their own daily experiences--then they will have an impact on those in power.

Who Should Make The Video Letter?

Because this Video Letter is intended to show what the CFUG implementation problems have been from user's experiences, it is important to keep the community focused on the need to include everyone--women as well as men, the elderly as well as those who are younger and stronger, the poor as well as the rich, landless people, those who are satisfied with the situation as it is and those who would like to see it changed.

Arrange with village leaders to call a community meeting to tell them what is needed and to invite them to participate. If they don't want to appear on camera or work directly with the video group that forms to make the letter, urge them to make their views known to this group so nothing important is left out. If a large number of people want to participate, try to break them into smaller groups with shared interests so that each group can focus on one point-of-view to be included. As the work on the Video Letter evolves and the content is decided on, others may be encouraged to join the groups for different reasons that the group believes to be important.

You will know from your previous video work in the village which people are motivated, which ones have particular camera skills, and those who are most powerful when speaking on camera. Encourage them to use their special skills and interests to facilitate the participation of those who are less assertive rather than dominating the work to be done. Let each group decide who will operate the camera and who will appear on the tape. Explain the importance of keeping the visual image steady so that viewers aren't distracted and let them choose who best can do this.

What Should Be In The Video Letter?

The content of the letter and the way its presented on the videotape may change a number of times as the community reviews what they've put on tape and decide whether another way of making the point might be better. But to get the groups started, try the following:

- * Show the forestry documentary that the community has already made
- * Show others segments of video tape made in the community that might be important
- * Review the issues raised and the points made by community members themselves in the different work you've been doing together
- * Make a list of all the issues the group thinks should be included in the letter
- * Help the group prioritize the importance of these issues to the entire community
- * Explain some of the video options they have for illustrating these issues (individuals speaking on camera, action scenes of people at work with voices over and so on)
- * Encourage group members to share ideas for the best way to make each point they've decided is important

Many new content decisions will be made as the Video Letter is being taped and reviewed, but these initial planning sessions are intended to help the community focus on what's most important to them. Explain that the final letter is to be fifteen minutes long and that if they can keep it simple and emotionally power that it will have more impact on those who see it. You can illustrate this point further with actual examples from the video work as it evolves.

When And Where Should The Video Letter Be Made?

The actual logistics of the camera work will depend on the free time participants have for this work. Since time is limited, you will need to assist in some of the logistics so that the camera is in use by many different groups throughout the day. Logistics may be the most complicated part of the work and these can only be determined based on the realities you find in the field.

Where the video group meets and where the video is made won't be the same place. Find a central meeting point, but encourage each group to film "on location" with some village scene that's a strong visual illustration of what they're saying in the background.

VII. MAKING THE VIDEO LETTER (Weeks Five and Six)

Finalizing The Camera Work Plan

Bring together a small representative group of participants to work out a scenario list of different video shots that might incorporate all the points people raised in the planning meetings. This may or may not be the final plan that those making the Video Letter follow, but it will help get the camera work started. Based on the logistics planning already done, work with several small groups on the first day to do some initial camera work on the scenario list.

Show this footage to everyone in the community participating in making the letter for their comments and ideas on where to go from here. Share the scenario list at this meeting and see what changes the larger group might want to make to the list. This meeting is the best opportunity to try to form consensus on what the group wants to say and how they want to change it.

Videotaping The Rough Footage

Following the revised scenario list, continue the camera work in small groups if this method is working or adapt in whatever way is needed to accomplish the Video Letter raw footage. To keep everyone in the community involved, invite them to review and offer revision suggestions for the scenarios each day so that the issues they want policy makers to pay attention to are presented in the strongest way possible.

As part of the camera work, tape a number of different people personally greeting the viewer, not formally, but informally saying who they are, whether or not they're a CFUG member, if not why not, and something about their family, how they earn a living, how they use the forest to help them survive. Not all the greetings will be used, but tape a number of different people representing all social groups and forest users in the VDC community sharing forest management. These can be used as an intro to the Video Letter and will be more interesting if they're taped in a variety of village settings that illustrate rural life in the community.

Also be sure that there is some footage of village life and forest users at work with no narration so that these can be added wherever they might be most effective in the final Video Letter.

Editing The Video Letter

When the group has reviewed the footage collected and agreed that what they want to say to policy

makers has been well said, explain to them more details of the editing process and why, for technical reasons, it is being done in a professional studio on their behalf. Get substantive input from group members on how editors should prioritize the scenes--what *must* be left in and what can be left out to fit the format. Explain how editors can cut different interviews and scenes, how they can add narration over scenes, etc. Give them some examples of editing options based on the tape they've reviewed and get as many ideas as possible from them on ways the Video Letter might be edited. Have someone tape this session if possible for sharing with the professional video editors in Kathmandu.

Both to help the editors know what to do and as possible narration for the Video Letter itself, have several group members try summarizing what's in the video and why it's important that policy makers take time to consider how community forest implementation can be revised and improved so that everyone can benefit from better managed forests in Nepal.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GREENCOM'S CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY VIDEO FOR SOCIAL MOBILIZATION IN RURAL NEPAL

1. That a step-by-step plans for teaching villagers how to operate and handle video cameras be included in these guidelines in a separate two-page boxed inset--with simple illustrations.
2. That Kedar Sharma test the guidelines for Community Video Fieldwork that we've prepared before writing the Nepali manual.
3. That the "spirit" of the guidelines be maintained (facilitating villager creativity rather than directing them on what to do) even if they need to be adapted to work locally.
4. That Kedar Sharma and others who do this fieldwork keep a detailed daily diary of what happened in the different activities--describe all the journalistic "who, what, when, where and why" background data, the things that worked, the problems that occurred, the readjustment in plans that you made in the work process, comments made by participants and so on.
5. That many new community forestry anecdotes be collected during the Community Video fieldwork so that the process we're developing goes deeper and deeper into real issues from local experience.
6. Revise the guideline work plan after the first period of field work based on your diary notes and on documentation video of the "process" that you bring back.
7. Translate the methodology and the guidelines into simple Nepali that clearly shows people how to facilitate without dominating the learning process.
8. Use the revised guidelines and selected video clips from the Community Video fieldwork as the basis for a training workshop for partner participation in continuing the use of video for social mobilization.
9. Continue refining the field methodology and activity guidelines for others who might want to try this approach to "bottom-up" communication.

**Prepared by Pamela Brooke for GREENCOM-Nepal
July 10, 1997**